

## 5. BIRTH OF A GREAT INDIAN RHINOCEROS IN CAPTIVITY

(With a plate)

The annual report (1956) of the Basel Zoo, Switzerland, contains an interesting account of the birth of a calf to the pair of Indian rhinos. Gadadhar the male and Joymoti the female were acquired from the Kaziranga Sanctuary as young animals in 1951 and 1952 respectively, and have since grown to maturity.

From certain symptoms, and from the behaviour of the animals at the beginning of 1956, it was suspected that the female was pregnant though frequent analyses of the urine gave negative results. At the end of April, however, movements of the foetus were discernible each time the female drank cold water. The calf was born on 14 September, the gestation period calculated from the last 'heat' in the female being 474 days. The mother immediately licked her baby clean, and then lay down beside it on the bedding straw. The calf (christened Rudra) made its first efforts to stand up 25 minutes after it was born, but succeeded in doing so only half an hour later. It first fed from its mother after two hours. Some time later the mother ate up the entire after-birth. Rudra's weight and length at birth, and monthly thereafter, are given as follows:

	Date	Weight (kilos)	Length (cm.)
1956	14 Sept. (at birth)	60.5	105
	13 Oct.	111	127
	10 Nov.	157	146
	15 Dec.	215	160
	15 Jan.	268	168
1957	15 Feb.	316	176
	16 Mar.	349	190

There are some interesting details given about the behaviour of the young. Soon after birth the colour of the skin was almost violet, with all the folds of the armour-plating as prominent as its mother's. The margins of the ears were fringed with a growth of hair c. 3 cm. long, and also the tail tuft was well developed. After some days the skin colour changed to the normal grey-brown of the adult, though the joints of the armour showed up reddish.

In a subsequent letter (dated 18 July 1957) Dr. Lang the Zoo Director writes that Rudra is flourishing and growing apace. Its weight at the time of writing, when just about 8 months old, was over 1,000 lb. The parents mated again and Joymoti has apparently become

pregnant once more. Dr. Lang hopes to ascertain the exact gestation period this time.

In the only previously known instance of an Indian rhino born in captivity (Calcutta Zoo, see *JBNHS* 31:1031, 1927) the gestation period was estimated as about 19 months. Earlier Hodgson had given it as 17 to 18 months.

For the African Twohorned Rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros bicornis*) the period of gestation is given as 530-570 days (THE NATURAL HISTORY OF MAMMALS by F. Bourliere: 165, 1955).

Since the birth in the Basel Zoo a further 'domestic occurrence' in the world of captive Indian rhinos has been reported. A calf was born in November 1957 to Mohini the female of the pair living in Whipsnade Park, U.K., since 1952. The gestation period in this case is said to have been 16 months. The calf at birth was about 22 inches in length and about 18 inches high, and estimated to weigh between 85-100 lb.

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## 6. THE MUNTJAC IN BRITAIN

The muntjac—frequently called the Barking Deer or Rib-faced Deer, by reason of its vocal powers or facial appearance—was first liberated about 1900 by the eleventh Duke of Bedford into the woods both inside and outside his park at Woburn. The original deer were the Indian race—*Muntiacus muntjak*—but after a time, partly because the bucks were proving dangerous to small dogs but mainly to make room for the smaller Reeves's Muntjac—*Muntiacus reevesi*, a native of China—efforts were made to kill off the Indian race. This was not completely achieved and the two races have inter-bred.

From Woburn this small deer has now extended its range into all adjacent counties, which include Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, and Northamptonshire, whilst individual animals have been reported as far afield as south Leicestershire and Essex.

As regards an estimate of the number of muntjac at large in Britain, this is of course almost impossible but I would say it was not less than 400 and might be up to 1,000. Northwest they have been recorded as much as sixty miles from Woburn and in the south-westerly direction quite a large number exist in the Bicester area which is about 25 miles from Woburn. In an easterly direction